

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 7 and 12 as follows.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1.-6. (cancelled)

7. (currently amended) A two-stage shock absorber comprising:

a pressure tube defining a chamber;

a piston rod assembly disposed within said chamber;

a valve assembly fixably attached to said piston rod and slidably engaging said pressure tube within said chamber, said valve assembly dividing said chamber into an upper and a lower working chamber, said valve assembly providing a first and a second fluid flow path between said upper and lower working chambers completely through said valve assembly, said first and second flow paths of said valve assembly being totally separate from one another; and

a sleeve slidably disposed on said valve assembly, said sleeve defining a plurality of holes through said piston rod assembly arranged in a helical spiral formation to create a third separate and distinct flow path extending between said upper and lower working chambers, said sleeve being operable to progressively close ~~[[a]]~~ said third separate and distinct flow path extending between said upper and lower working chambers by sequentially covering said plurality of holes when movement of said valve assembly exceeds a specified distance, said progressive closing of said third flow path providing a progressively higher resistance to the movement of said valve assembly, ~~said third flow path comprising a plurality of holes through said piston rod assembly~~

~~arranged in a helical spiral formation,~~ said sleeve simultaneously covering all of said plurality of holes to fully close said third flow path.

8. (original) The two stage shock absorber according to Claim 7 wherein said piston rod assembly comprises a piston rod and a piston nut, said plurality of holes extending through said piston nut.

9. (original) The two-stage shock absorber according to Claim 7 wherein said valve assembly comprises a compression valve assembly and a rebound valve assembly.

10. (original) The two stage shock absorber according to Claim 7 wherein said sleeve is frictionally held by said pressure tube.

11. (original) The two stage shock absorber according to Claim 7 wherein said sleeve is operable to progressively close said plurality of holes.

12. (currently amended) A two-stage shock absorber comprising:
a pressure tube defining a chamber;
a piston rod assembly disposed within said chamber;
a valve assembly fixably attached to said piston rod and slidably engaging said pressure tube within said chamber, said valve assembly dividing said chamber into an upper and a lower working chamber, said valve assembly providing a first and a

second fluid flow path between said upper and lower working chambers completely through said valve assembly, said first and second flow paths of said valve assembly being totally separate from one another; and

a sleeve slidably disposed on said valve assembly, said sleeve defining a hole located at a base of a groove, said groove extending from said hole in a helical spiral along an outer surface of said piston assembly to a terminal end to create a third separate and distinct flow path extending between said upper and lower working chambers, said sleeve being operable to progressively close ~~[[a]] said third separate and distinct flow path extending between said upper and lower working chambers by progressively covering said groove from said hole to said terminal end~~ when movement of said valve assembly exceeds a specified distance, said progressive closing of said third flow path providing a progressively higher resistance to the movement of said valve assembly, ~~said third flow path comprising a hole and a groove extending from said hole in a helical spiral along an outer surface of said piston assembly to a terminal end, a depth of said groove decreasing from said hole to said terminal end,~~ said sleeve simultaneously covering said hole and said groove to fully close said third flow path.

13. (original) The two stage shock absorber according to Claim 12 wherein said piston rod assembly comprises a piston rod and a piston nut, said hole and said groove being disposed in said piston nut.

14. (original) The two-stage shock absorber according to Claim 12 wherein said valve assembly comprises a compression valve assembly and a rebound valve assembly.

15. (original) The two stage shock absorber according to Claim 12 wherein said sleeve is frictionally held by said pressure tube.

16.-17. (cancelled)

18. (original) The two stage shock absorber according to Claim 12 wherein said sleeve is operable to progressively cover said hole and said groove.